

Agricultural Marketing Service
Office of the Deputy Administrator for Marketing Programs
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Processed Products Branch
Area Office
GS-303-6 , Administrative Support Assistant (Office Automation)

SJ FV55
(November 2003)

I. INTRODUCTION

This position is located in an Area Office of the Processed Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs. The Area office is responsible for carrying out program responsibilities related to the inspection of processed fruits and vegetables and miscellaneous commodities for the assigned geographic area.

The incumbent serves as an Administrative Support Assistant responsible for performing and/or technically overseeing a variety of support functions for the Area Office.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Accounts and Billing Activities - 50%

Performs and/or coordinates the performance of the following duties through the use of an electronic billing and collection system: based on written or oral requests, prepares applications for services by inputting pertinent data into the electronic system; reviews, verifies, and reconciles financial related data for all grading certificates; receives reports of hours worked from graders in charge of plants under contract and reconciles timesheets as necessary, assuring proper apportionment of charges; completes fee/charge documents electronically using information from graders worksheets and a rate code table. Posts data from these documents and the certificate in the appropriate electronic ledgers, transmits fee/charge documents to the Washington headquarters office on a weekly basis; reviews applications ledger on a monthly basis to ensure services have been completed and applicants have been billed; reviews accounts receivable status printouts, detail transaction reports, cost responsibility center reports, and various other reports from NFC for discrepancies, errors, or omissions, and follows-up with appropriate memoranda requesting corrections as necessary. Identifies delinquent accounts using information from NFC, contracts and/or writes delinquent plants/companies and notifies NFC to move delinquent accounts to claim status.

Prepares and/or oversees preparation of certificates, billing documents and reports for services performed on a cross-utilization basis with other grading programs of AMS or with other federal agencies, including the Department of Commerce. Assures appropriate records are maintained, that billing documents have been prepared properly by NFC, and that payments for services have been received.

Coordinates the preparation and/or prepares all grading certificates based on information provided by Graders. Assures certificate information is accurate and complete. Based on familiarity with certificate requirements, identifies missing and/or inaccurate/incomplete information provided by the Grader on worksheets and obtains appropriate/required data.

Develops and initiates statistical reports on office fiscal activities. Responsible for all documents related to the Office's accounting system. Recommends modified, new, or additional accounting methods. Reviews methods for accuracy and meeting objectives.

Advises the Officer-In-Charge on current status of expenses and revenues. Monitors the Office's travel costs and recommends ways to economize on expenditures. Provides interpretation of Federal Travel Regulations to Officer-In-Charge and Office staff. Initiates blanket purchase agreements or blanket purchase orders for ongoing operation of the office. Reviews justifications and recommends approval to OIC. Recommends purchases based on status of funds.

2. General Administrative Activities – 40%

Maintains the Plant Information Systems (PLIS) data base. Assures accurate information regarding contract status of plants, surety bond information, amount of surety bond, data of most recent plant survey, etc. Initiates all paperwork associated with establishing contracts with plants for grading services, and prepares reports of cancellations or failure to renew contracts, etc. Advises OIC of applicants, based on continuous on-going use of grading services, may warrant initiation of a contract.

Where applicable, prepares import reports listing certificate numbers, country of origin, product, vessel, pier location, etc

Researches information requests from agencies, organizations, or individuals (Federal, State or private). Requests often involve sensitive information and incumbent responds to such requests diplomatically and knowledgeably.

Organizes the clerical support duties of the Office. Plans in advance of the workflow and priorities and assigns work to subordinate clerks accordingly. Trains and cross-trains other clerks and makes recommendations for formal training. Provides technical guidance as necessary.

Takes requests for inspection and, as directed, relays requests to graders in the field. May assist OIC or supervisor in scheduling graders for plant or inspection assignments.

Utilizes a microcomputer to prepare and input various accounting and personnel records as well as prepare correspondence. Utilizes a variety of software packages, including Paradox for the military rations program activities, XDB Data Base for the billing and collections activities, dBase applications for the PLIS, Word, WordPerfect, BRIO, FFIS, Excel, and a Branch-specific certificate ledger program.

Gathers statistics or other information and prepares a variety of reports on office operations.

Prepares and submits, or coordinates the preparation of Time and Attendance (T&A) reports, travel vouchers, and accident forms. Cross-checks T&A's against billing documents to assure appropriate/consistent reflection of hours worked and time billed to plants/industry.

Maintains statistics for and prepares reports covering training, mileage, assignments of employees, and intermittent employment limitations.

Maintains inventory and accountability records of all Area Office property. Distributes accountable items such as certificates, file codes, and stamps. Requisitions office supplies and equipment using purchase orders, and may solicit bids for various office services. Obtains services for repair and maintenance of equipment.

Composes and types correspondence, either independently or on brief, verbal instructions or rough drafts from the OIC. Coordinates all office administrative activities, including reviewing/distributing incoming mail, receiving telephone calls and handling routine requests independently, procuring of office supplies, etc.

3. Personnel Activities - 10%

Assists with carrying out the basic and operational personnel activities of the Area Office.

Assists with the maintenance of current records of all personnel changes for ceiling, financial reports, and reference purposes including typing all changes onto records cards and inputting data into a computer program.

Assists with obtaining information from regional office on such matters as alternative means of filling vacancies, including appointment authorities, work schedules, special employment programs, and cooperative agreements. Recommends methods of recruitment for positions within the Area.

Assists with obtaining registers of eligible applicants, receives applications for employment, makes pre-employment checks, performs preliminary qualifications checks, and reviews all required appointment documents. Reviews all job applications for Federal employment for Temporary Mixed Tour employees to ascertain eligibility for employment and at appropriate grade level.

Provides information to employees of the Office on personnel and employee benefit matters. Reviews related forms and documents submitted by employees and staff for accuracy.

Adheres to Equal Employment and Civil Rights policies, goals and objectives in performing the duties of this position. Assures that oral and written communications are bias-free and that differences of other employees and clients are respected and valued.

III. FACTORS

1. Knowledge Required by the Position

Knowledge of USDA, NFC, MRP, AMS and Branch account maintenance system techniques, procedures, and practices to maintain electronic user-fee ledgers, prepare the range of Office accounting documents, and collect on past due accounts.

Thorough knowledge of applicable USDA, NFC, MRP, AMS, and Branch policies, regulations, guidelines and systems associated with the financial assistance and general clerical activities of the Area Office.

Knowledge of the Processed Products Branch grading and inspection program mission, functions, and objectives as they apply and relate to the financial assistance and general clerical activities of the Area Office.

Ability to establish rapport and conduct oneself in a tactful and diplomatic manner with vendors and program officials at all levels.

Familiarity with procedures to prepare personnel forms and ability to answer questions regarding same or other administrative matters including T&A's and travel.

Skill in maintaining and compiling statistical data for administrative reports.

Skill in utilizing a micro-computer for word processing, electronic ledger and accounting system, certificate, spreadsheet and other functions, and an electric typewriter. A qualified typist is required. Knowledge of grammar, spelling, capitalization, etc., to review and/or prepare correspondence.

2. Supervisory Controls

Receives technical and administrative supervision from the Officer-In-Charge. The OIC makes assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The employee independently plans and carries out the work and handles problems and deviations/issues in accordance with office practice. Completed work is generally accepted with minimal review.

3. Guidelines

Guidelines include USDA, NFC, MRP, AMS, and Branch fiscal and administrative regulations, manuals, handbooks, and directives applicable to the financial and general clerical activities associated with the processed fruit and vegetables grading/inspection program. These guidelines include instructions on computing charges to applicants, collections, monthly reports, training reports, as well as time and attendance procedures. Guidelines are generally specific in nature, but are not completely applicable to every situation particularly as it relates to the new electronic billing and collection program.

The incumbent is required to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines and making minor deviations to adapt them to specific cases. Situations which require interpretation or significant deviation from the guidelines are referred to the OIC or regional office.

4. Complexity

The nature of the work involves the maintenance of accounts and ledgers for grading and inspection services and the performance of a variety of general clerical support duties. The employee must be familiar with a wide variety of subjects including personnel, procurement, billing and collection activities, specifications, military rations program activities (where applicable), marketing orders, and Branch accounting procedures. The incumbent must be alert to changes in regulations/procedures and make adjustments accordingly.

While the transactions and accounts vary, the tasks and applicable documentation are standardized, subject to similar treatment, and are recurring in nature. The work requires decisions concerning the interpretation of data, planning of work, or refining methods and techniques.

5. Scope and Effect

The incumbent is expected to identify and correct errors in documents and records, balance billing accounts, follow up on delinquent accounts, prepare reports, and reconcile discrepancies in automated accounting reports.

The purpose of the work is to facilitate the prompt and accurate reimbursement of rendered grading and inspection services, and to provide general office services. This assists the local OIC in carrying out the work of the office, and the National Office in projecting, planning, and controlling costs and revenue.

6. Personal Contacts

Contacts are with coworkers and Branch/Program personnel, employees of NFC, Federal and State government personnel, industry representatives and users of the service, and the general public.

7. Purpose of the Contacts

Contacts are for the purpose of receiving instructions, exchanging information, and resolving work related problems.

8. Physical Demands

The work is primarily sedentary; however, the employee may be required to walk, stand, bend, stoop and carry relatively light items such as books and files.

9. Work Environment

The work is performed in an office setting.